

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has agreed to fund repairs to damage along the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail caused last year by spring storms and Tropical Storm Irene, Sens. Patrick Leahy and Bernie Sanders and Rep. Peter Welch announced today.

"We appreciate FEMA's careful consideration and support for the trail which is an incredible asset for Vermonters and visitors alike," the delegation said in a joint statement.

Gov. Peter Shumlin said, "I'm very pleased the regional FEMA administrator overturned the decision of the FEMA field staff that denied eligibility for recovery funding for the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail from the damage it sustained in the spring floods. This is an important trail for Vermont that suffered serious damage in spring storms and last summer's Tropical Storm Irene."

Severe spring storms last April and May caused almost \$400,000 in damage to the trail. Then in August, Tropical Storm Irene lashed Vermont and caused another \$250,000 in damages to the 93-mile, state-owned trail.

The decision by FEMA Regional Director Don Boyce clears the way for the state to recover 90 percent of the eligible costs to repair the trail. The congressional delegation had strongly supported the Vermont Agency of Transportation in appealing previous denials of requests for reimbursement.

The trail runs from Swanton, Vt., to St. Johnsbury, Vt., along the former Lamoille Valley Railroad.

The Vermont Agency of Transportation owns the railway right-of-way, and the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers manages the trail for the state.

"VAST appreciates the hard work of the Shumlin administration in pursuing the appeal and the congressional delegation for actively supporting the appeal," Executive Director Alexis Nelson said.

Sanders previously secured a \$5.2 million federal grant to improve the trail that will provide access to some of the most beautiful – and otherwise inaccessible – areas in Vermont.